3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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bunch of "sal" flowers, there a village-group sitting at a feast of rice and rice-beer. We were also invited to examine some more wall-paintings, walls which were proud to bear representations of steam-engines and aero-planes, and marking our reluctance to be so near modernism, our Santal friends expressed profound surprise.

The yard is scrupulously clean, and, to translate a Bengali saying, "You might pick vermilion if some dropped upon it." There is sometimes the finish of a cement but generally everything is plastered over with mud and cow-dung. Jutting out into the lane are the pig-styes and poultry-yard. The room at the entrance is the "Gohal" (*cattle-shed*). Almost invariably a stench will repel one's olfactory nerves, but then one must not forget that the Santals like the Hindus almost worship the cows; and the first item in their annual Harvest Home is the "Gohal puja," when the cows are anointed with vermilion and adored as their best earthly possession. There, one will find the oil-press and the rice-husking "dheñki." In the houses of the more affluent, a separate outer house can be found which gives the combined service of a kitchen and poultry-yard. Drinking-water drawn from the neighbouring springs is stored in earthen pitchers, about two cubits and a half in height, and kept in a conspicuous place.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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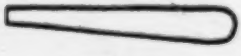
[824]

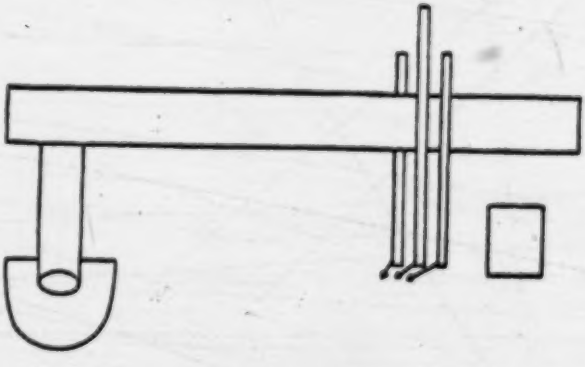
For husking paddy, they use a mortar hollowed out of a huge log of "sal." Paddy is husked in this implement with the help of a wooden pestle called "tuk" by being wielded by the hands at the butt-end. The Santali *dheñki* (*husking implement*) is of the sort one

Ukhur



Tuk

Sal-wood



Sal Hole in the earth

[824] meets with in Hindu households. They are made of sal-wood ; only they look a bit crude. (See illustrations).

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342 ventilation except a few holes high up on the wall. In front of the house the eaves of the roof are elongated which serves as a covered verandah. The floor of the house is a little raised above the ground, being filled up with earth. This is trampled down hard and made smooth with mud mixed with cowdung.

342 Every Santal house in which the head of the
778 family lives has a 'Bhitar'. This is a part of a room
769 partitioned by a low wall which runs out from the side wall some six to nine feet into the com-
[609] partment. It is a kind of stall, and is sacred to the ancestors. Here food is kept for the ancestors and no
[784] stranger is permitted inside. The married daughter of the house, who in her girlhood was allowed entry is now not permitted inside, because she now belongs to another family and might cause religious pollution.

343 There is a separate shed for cattle. Within this
231 shed in some houses special arrangement is made to keep pigs. In one corner of the cattle-shed two mud-walls about three feet in height are built, to form a small rectangular sty. Over it bamboo sticks and branches of trees are placed, so that pigs cannot escape by jumping. A hole is made in one of the walls and bamboo sticks are placed there in such a way that by raising these sticks the pigs can easily come out and enter. But in some villages in the Godda Damin are found the pig-sheds built outside the house. In this case the walls of about 5 feet and the roof are made of thatch.

342 Inside the house on the verandah the "Dhenk" 1
252 (rice-husker) is fixed and a mill-stone is kept. Except
351 during cold season, when the inside is warm, the
[407] Santals generally stay outside on the courtyard both day

1 [Erratum: this should read "'Dhenki'". Cf. errata sheet, category 116, p. ix -- Analyst]

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241 on a steep hill-side; when the wood of the felled 191 trees is dry, generally toward the end of the hot season, it is burned. In this way the ground is cleared, and when the rains set in, the seed is sown without any ploughing. The present-day Paharias make small holes with a crow-bar and drop the seed into the holes, especially of bajra, Sorghum vulgare Pers., of maize and of a few other kinds. This is all, except that they may 241 pluck away weeds. It is said that when the Santals in former times followed a similar mode of cultivation they simply sowed the seed (especially bajra) at the top of the cleared hill-side, the spreading being left to the water of the rains flowing down; in some cases, a branch of a thorn-tree (Zizyphus Jujuba Lam.) is said to have been pressed into a flat shape and dragged over the ground to spread the seed".

243 From early morning till evening they work in the [46] field. Rice is their staple food; in it wealth is reck- [556] oned and from it they obtain their drink. Both sexes [262] work in the field. Every man tries to secure agricultural [462] fields near his house and also near a streamlet flowing. They cultivate their soil and also gather natural produce when their crops do not grow due to want of rain or for some other reasons. The Santals prepare two kinds of rice field. One type is adjoining their houses, the other is at some distance away from their houses, which is on high land.

Preparation of ricefield :— After selecting the site, the Santals clear the field of jungle and vegetation. Then they surround it with ridges but if the land is slopy then they make the ridge only on the lower [412] side. With the hoe and a heavy leveller (karha) they [407]

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level the field as far as possible. With the help of plough the Santals plough the rice field several times before transplanting the rice seedlings. [243] [412] [407]

Transplantation :—In a rice field, during the months of May and June after making the earth loose they bring seeds in a basket and scatter them over the loose earth with the hand. Then the earth is again pressed down with the leveller and the seeds are thus buried in. When the seedlings grow to a certain height they are then pulled out and transplanted two or three together in the prepared field. They transplant the seedlings about one foot apart and in rows. They have three kinds of transplanted paddy. The earliest varieties ripen in the month of September. The second one, which they transplant in high land, ripens in the month of October. The third variety becomes ripe between November and December and is transplanted in low land. In the Santal Paraganas the Santals have got another kind of crop which is done simply by sowing the paddy seeds in the prepared rice fields and which ripen in the month of August. The transplanting is generally done by the Santal women. [407] [462]

Threshing :—When the crops grow properly and become ripe they cut them with sickle and carry them to a place which they clean with earth and cowdung. There in the centre they keep one big stone, on which they strike the rice saplings. Sometimes they use bullocks for threshing. A few bullocks, tied in a line, walk round and round on the spreading straw. With the above processes they separate the paddy from the stalk. Then with the winnowing fan they clean the paddy separating them from other impurities. [412] [231] [412]

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[facing P. 22]

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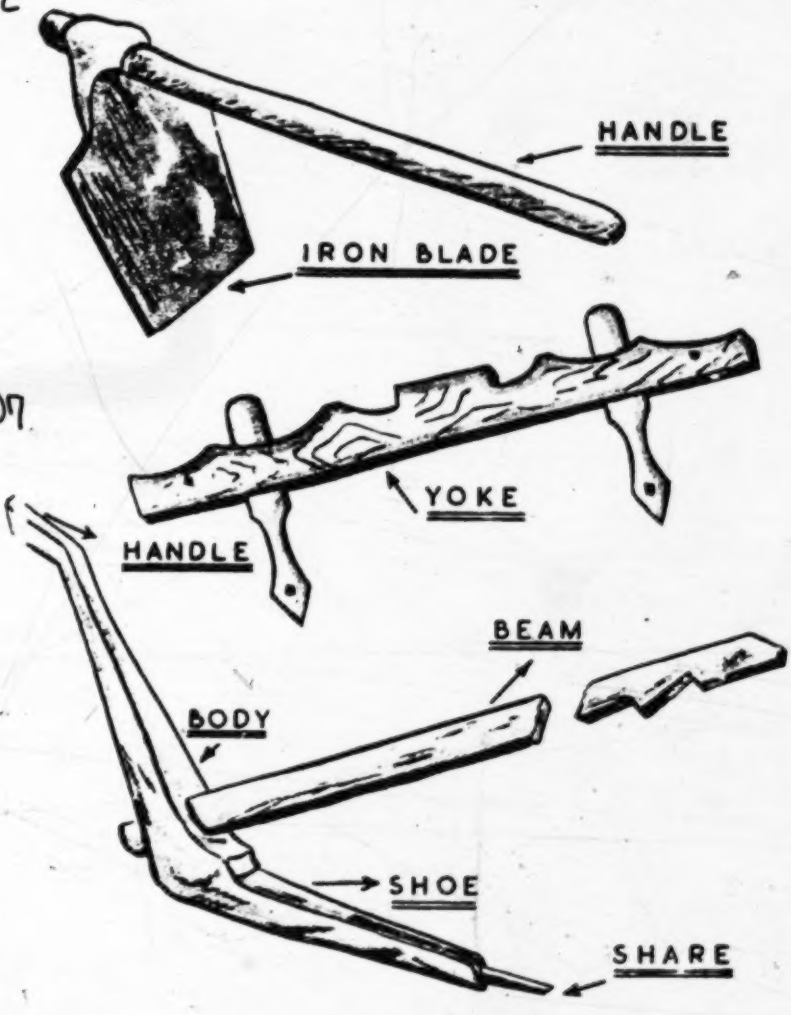

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243 Before husking, the Santals treat the paddy in the following ways. First they soak the paddy in water by keeping in an earthern vessel for several hours, then they boil the soaked paddy. After boiling they spread the paddy on the courtyard for drying. They do not keep the paddy long in the sun because too much dried paddy will be brittle and during the time of husking the rice will break into pieces. After drying they store the paddy in baskets which they prepare with the strands of straw. Sometime they do it not by boiling but only drying in the sun. The paddy treated thus is husked either with a *"dhenki"* (husking machine) or with the pestle and mortar. To get clean rice the Santals husk the paddy more than once. Then with the winnowing fan they remove the husk separated from the grain.

[412]
[407]

AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS

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[177] **Plough** :—The Santals who live near the Bengal border or in low lands use generally the same type of plough which is used in Bengal, but the plough which is commonly used by the Santals is somewhat different from the Bengal plough.

The Santal plough consists of mainly, three parts, (*a*) the plough proper (nahel), (*b*) the plough beam (isi), (*c*) the yoke (arar).

The plough proper is made of a single piece of wood which is slightly curved forming an angle generally of 130° at its middle part where the body and the shoe meet each other. The handle (Karmba) which is four to six inches long and roughly circular in cross-section is not a separate piece of wood but simply a projected outward piece coming out from the body.

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The body is narrower at the top (nahel bohok) from where the handle is projected outside and then it gradually becomes thick and ends in the shoe. The middle part of the body is called *nahel koram* and the curved part where the body and the shoe meet is called *nahel deki*. The length of the body is about twenty to twenty four inches. At the lower part of the *nahel koram* and just above the *nahel deki* a rectangular hole is cut to receive the plough-beam. The shoe is thick, about 18" long and at the thickest part of it is about 8" in breadth. The shoe gradually tapers towards the front point which is called *nahel toda*. The under or back surface of the shoe is flat but the upper surface tapers towards the middle where a prominent ridge is formed. The cross-section of this part is roughly triangular. In the middle of the front top of the shoe a groove (pal orak) is made to set the ploughshare. The ploughshare (pal) is made of a long, narrow and flat piece of iron which is inserted into the groove and fixed by an iron staple. It is about 16" to 20" in length and 1" in breadth and 0.4" in thickness. The plough-beam which is inserted into the rectangular hole of the body is made of a long, flat solid wood and is called *isi* or *horisi*. The beam has got three notches on its underside where it is to be tied with the yoke, but in some cases it has got only two notches and sometimes having none. The length of the beam is about five feet and roughly rectangular in cross-section. The yoke (arar) is made of a solid wood with two long wooden pegs (each is about 17" to 18" long) inserted through two holes bored near the two ends of the yoke. These pegs are used to keep the bullocks in proper position when the latter are yoked. The upper surface

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•407 of the yoke is carved into steps which facilitates tying the yoke with the beam by means of a twisted leather thong (mangle). A man from behind drives the bullocks and regulates the pressure of the plough-share on the soil by holding the handle and the soil is furrowed.

Leveller (karha and rakaa) :—The leveller is used to level the field and to press the soil. A detailed description of it is given by Rev. Bodding in his memoir, "How the Santals live", which is as follows :—

"The karha is a piece of wood, some 1.5 m. (more or less) long, some 0.3 to 0.4 m. broad and some 10 cm. thick at the top side, and gradually sloping down to a broad edge. As they have no saws, the Santals (who make all such things themselves) fashion the karha with axe and adze. It is made of some strong and heavy wood (Sal, Mahua, etc.). In the middle of the top side a handle (the karha karmba) is fixed in a hole cut for the purpose. It is a straight piece of wood. The size of the karha varies according to needs; the smaller one is called dangra karha, bullock-leveller, and the larger one kada karha, buffalo-leveller At each end there is ordinarily what is called nakic, comb, having one, two or three 'teeth', called sula, on which an iron ring called *halka*, is slipped down, when the karha is to be used. This form is called *nakic karha*. In one form of karha is put through the hole and kept in position by a piece of wood inserted, to prevent the *halka* from slipping through. This form is called *rotok karha*, cut through leveller (from *rok*, to cut). There is a third form called *rotok nakic karha*; this is so large that it would not be convenient to have the *nakic* at the two

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ends. Two large holes are therefore cut in the body of the *karha*, equidistant from each end; on the inner side of each hole a *sula*, 'tooth', is made to slip the *halka* in. The *karha* is, as stated, dragged by a pair of bullocks or buffaloes. To join the *karha* to the yoke a *karha* dandit, a leveller-beam, is used, corresponding to the ploughbeam (isi). It is a piece of wood, frequently bamboo, about 2 m. long, or a little more. It is split in two at the *karha* end, with a hole at each end. Into each hole an iron hook, to which a *halka* is attached, is fixed. There are naturally two *halkas*. At the yoke end the *dandit* is whole, where the split commences (about 0.7 to 1 m. down) a cord is tied to prevent the beam from splitting higher up. In the case of a bamboo *dandit* the *uti* or joint serves the same purpose as cord. When in use the man in charge puts the *karha* down into the earth that is to be removed, as one would put in a spade; when the bullocks drag the *karha* along with the earth, the man holds the handle firmly to prevent the *karha* from turning over. When he has reached the spot where the earth is to be deposited, he lets go the handle, and then the *karha* automatically turns over. The earth is left lying there and the bullocks drag the *karha* back to the place where they started. On a new *karha* with three 'teeth', the *halka* is placed on the lower *sula*; when the *karha* becomes worn, the *halka* is put on the middle or the top *sula*. Some well-to-do Santals have instead of the dandit two iron chains with a *halka* at the *karha* ends. Loose earth is naturally necessary for the operation. The use of a *karha* is therefore practically restricted to the autumn or just after rain in the dry season. Ploughing is often resorted to preparatory to using the *karha*."

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"The *raksa* resembles the *karha*. It is a piece of wood about two to three mm. long and 15 to 20 cm. broad, slightly thinner than a *karha*. The *raksa* is slighly curved and has an edge. It has two holes cut equidistant from the centre for the *halka*, and has a handle (*raksa kurmba*) fixed in the middle. It resembles the *rotok* and is worked very much like *karha*. It is used only for levelling rice-fields just before the planting, and as it is used in watery mud, there is no need for the same strength as in the *karha*. Only few men in a village have a *raksa*. They willingly lend it to those who need such an implement."

[1126]

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Hoe (Kudi):—The Santal *kudi* is an ordinary type of hoe which is used in Bengal and in some other parts of India. The implement consists of two parts—one is wooden handle and other is iron blade. The handle is about 2'-6" long, roughly circular in cross-section about 2" in diameter and slightly thicker at one end where it is to be inserted into the socket of the blade. The blade is made of a flat sheet of iron. It consists of a body which is more or less rectangular in shape, twelve inches long and eight inches broad. The side edges of the body are slightly concave in outline. The broad projected rear portions of the body form the shoulders and from the middle of this side the neck rises. The neck ends with a socket in which the wooden handle is inserted. The Santals use this for digging earth and also with this they make and repair ridges of the rice fields.

Mallet (Clod Breaker)—It is a wooden hammer. It consists of two parts, wooden handle and a cylindrical wooden head which acts as a hammer. The handle is

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[Facing P. 27]

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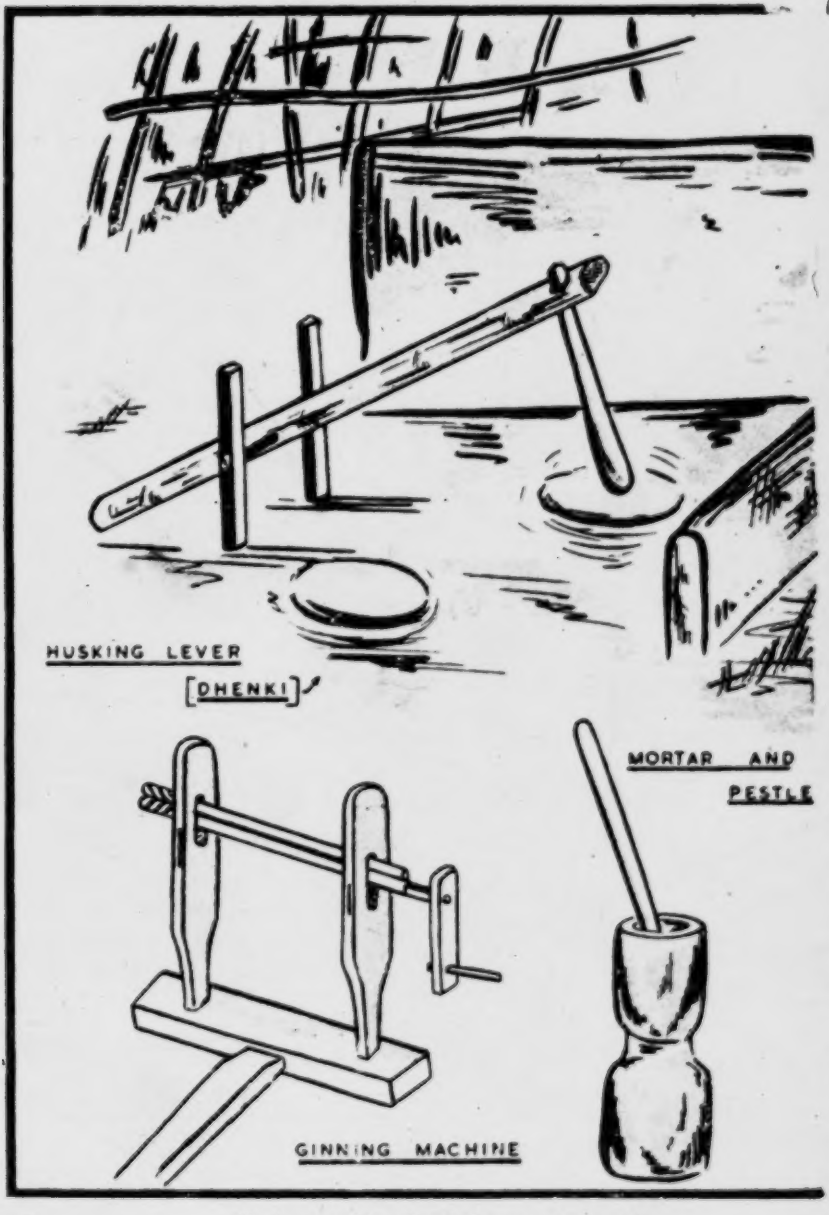

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Ginning machine description see (page 44)

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short about three feet in length and one inch in diameter, which is inserted in a perforated hole of the cylindrical hammer and a little of the handle comes out of the hammer, where a wooden clip is fitted so that the handle may not come out of the hammer It is generally used for breaking big clods of earth.

Mortar and Pestle:— The mortar is made from a hard log of wood. One side of it is scooped out to form a deep cup-like pit having a round bottom. The basal portion is a solid block of wood with a flat end which looks like the stand of the mortar. There is a constriction outside between the hollow portion and solid stand.

The pestle is made of a heavy, long, solid, cylindrical, wooden rod with a constriction at the middle which serves as the grip.

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Husking lever (dhenki):— The implement consists of a horizontal lever and a short heavy pestle. The lever is made out of a long, heavy and solid wood which is about 6-feet long and roughly rectangular in cross-section. The anterior end of the lever is somewhat conical and near to this on its under surface a pestle made of a separate piece of wood is vertically fixed. The pestle is narrow, cylindrical in shape and about 2½ feet long. A wooden mortar is placed in the earth in such a way that the pestle falls vertically in that when the implement is in action. The posterior part of the lever is comparatively thinner and lighter than the anterior one. A hole which is perforated throughout the breadth of the lever is present at about a third of its length from the anterior end and a wooden bar is inserted into it. Two vertical poles with deep

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407 notches, one in each, at its upper end are fixed into the ground on the either side of the lever. Both ends of the wooden bar rest on these notches. The whole arrangement is such that the pestle is raised along with the head of the lever by the pressure of the foot and falls on the grain by its own weight when the foot is removed.

412 **Scythe:**— The implement consists of a wooden handle and an iron blade. The wooden handle is solid, cylindrical in shape and more or less uniform in diameter. At one end it becomes suddenly narrower to provide the insertion of the iron ferrule.

The iron blade is made from a single piece of iron. It is crescentic in shape with the outer side convex and a concave sharp inner edge meant for cutting. The blade ends in a long tang which is introduced into the narrow end of the handle and strengthened by an iron ferrule which protects the handle from the splitting at the time of insertion of the tang of the blade The total length is 13 inches (5 inches handle and 8 inches blade) and the maximum breadth of the blade is about 1 inch.

Sickle:— The implement is entirely made of iron It consists of a blade and a handle made from the same piece of iron. The blade is curved and crescentic in shape. The anterior end of the blade is pointed. The concave edge of the blade is serrated obliquely and these teeth are directed inward. The basal portion of the blade ends in a hollow cylindrical handle. The portion of the handle near the blade is narrow and it gradually becomes broad at the free end.

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ends with turmeric. Formerly, all these clothes were made on their own loom, but now-a-days the Santals generally buy what they need from the market of the adjoining town.

Spinning and weaving:-The Santals wear cloth prepared on their own loom with their own thread besides purchasing from the market. They raise cotton for their own use. After the cotton is brought in, the first process is ginning. The ginning machine is very simple. It is an upright (drawing) frame work in which two wooden rollers are arranged to run in opposite directions by a sort of gear when the crank attached to one roller is turned. Cotton with seeds are put within the two rollers, and when the rollers are made to revolve, the cotton is separated from the seeds. Cotton is then spread and small bits of cotton are put over a bowstring which is then snapped. This does away with all the lumps and makes the cotton fluffy. It is then made into small rolls preparatory to spinning. Spinning is done by the spinning wheel. Spinning wheels are essentially spindles fitted horizontally into bearings and rotated by means of a cord passing round the threads attached to the two wheels and spindle. The wheels are revolved by hand alone. The spindle consists of a long iron needle, the working end is pointed, the other end is inserted into a fixed horizontal wood. Two wheels are fixed at a distance of about 6 inches to 8 inches apart in wood, a round stone is inserted in it between the two wheels. The two ends of the wood, with which wheels are attached, are placed on two uprights which again are fixed on a base of a "T" shaped wooden frame. The handle is fixed to the wood in which the wheels are fixed.

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and it is conducted according to the provision of the Indian Christian Marriage Act.

Material Culture. Material culture of the Santals of the Santal parganas has not much changed. They now wear cotton dhuties, shirts and gangees and the women have accepted cotton saris which are used by the Hindus. The well-to-do Christian Santals wear European dress, *i.e.* coats, pants, shirts, socks and shoes. The christian women wear Saris, blouses and petti coat according to the Hindu style.

Some of the younger men and women of the Christian community go out for employment in the towns and cities and when they come back they display their superior material culture, such as fountain pen, wristwatches and other luxury goods.

Rice beer is their important drink but the Christian missionaries make propaganda in favour of total abstinence, and the Christian Santals are gradually giving up this habit and tea is being substituted for it. Machine made cigarettes are slowly coming into use.

In the preparation of rice it seems they have copied something from the Bengali Hindus. The Santals like the Bengalis use boiled rice for their food and unboiled rice for offering to their tribal deities.

The indigenous husking machine of the Santals is mortar and pestle, but they also use husking lever (dhenki) in husking rice which they have copied from their Hindu neighbours.

The Santals, when they speak among themselves, use their own language. But with the 'Dikhus' in the Santal Parganas they speak in broken Hindi and

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the food of the *Turuk*, rice or other food, the spirits will run away. If anyone has fever or if we want to exorcize a spirit, we try to give him curds made by a *Turuk* to eat. They say that in olden times one Mirza Turuk drove us from the country we were in. On a certain plain we made ready twelve carts and fled away across the open country. Mirza Turuk searched and could not find us. He thought: 'I must search for the tracks of twelve carts.' However, as we drove the twelve carts one behind the other, we made only one track, and so he never found us." The local Moslem population is very small[1] and confined to one or two villages of weavers and cultivators, who are themselves deeply affected by the Hindu environment. No doubt the story is very different in those districts of Northern Bengal where the Moslems predominate, but even there the great dissimilarity between Moslem and Santal culture probably militates against influences passing from the one to the other.

Christian influence, the result of a sustained and conscious effort on the part of missions, is considered later. Of deliberate efforts to Hinduize the religious practices and beliefs of the Santals the area is ignorant.

Note to Chapter 2

The relation of the aboriginal peoples to Hindu society has given rise to much controversy and discussion in India, not all of which is conducted in a spirit of scientific inquiry. An able presentation of many of the facts dealt with in this and the previous chapter, together with much else, and written from the Hindu standpoint, can be found in *The Aborigines—"So-called"—and Their Future*, by G. S. Ghurye, Ph.D. (Cantab.), published by the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, 1943.

[1] The figures given for the local Moslem population in 1931 were as follows:

	Males	*Females*
Ranisandh Thana	238	190
Raipur Thana	358	278